



Arizona Department of Education

Early Childhood Education

ADE / ECE



UPDATE

APRIL 2012

Please share this publication with all of your preschool and related services staff (speech pathologists, occupational therapists, etc.). Past publications are online.

U.S. Department of Education Announces **Ed-first** ever Office for Early Learning

Jacqueline Jones, Senior Advisor on Early Learning, announced the U.S. Department of Education's plan to create the first ever Office for Early Learning. We have a voice!! The objective of this new office will be to correct the isolation in which federal early learning programs and funds have functioned and provide the strong coordinated collaboration necessary to dramatically improve early learning services.

The Office will provide institutionalized and coordinated federal support for high-quality early learning and enhance management and support for the early learning community and early learning education systems throughout the country. The Department of Education has been working tirelessly to recruit the best practitioners and partners in the field to bring the widest depth and scope to the conversation on early learning.

This effort met with its first break through with the [Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge](#), a \$500 million federal commitment that supports states efforts to create comprehensive plans to improve early learning and development programs that will allow all children to enter kindergarten ready to succeed. [Thirty-five states in addition to the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico](#) submitted applications for these funds, demonstrating their commitment to successful early learning for every child and Arizona has applied!

The Department of Education's commitment to the Office for Early Learning acknowledges the fundamental understanding that a child's success begins in the earliest stages of his or her development. Through this Office, the Department of Education can continue to ensure that all students are given the skills and abilities to succeed throughout their lives, regardless of what they were born with.

Certification

On July 1, 2012, the Early Childhood Education Certification goes into effect for those teaching general education preschool and kindergarten (Grades 1-3 are optional). If you have questions regarding certification please contact Maura Yildirim at 602.542.0127 or maura.yildirim@azed.gov

Lighthouse Programs

Laveen Elementary

Phoenix

602.237.9100

Sunnyside Unified

Tucson

520.545.2000

Flowing Wells Unified

Emily Meschler Early

Learning Center

Tucson, AZ

520.696.8800

Contact Juliana

Panqueva to schedule a visit for ADE/ECE staff member to put your program on our Lighthouse Registry!!

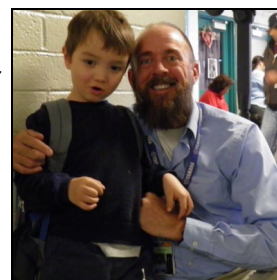


Lighthouse Program #2

By Paul Ohm

The Ocotillo Learning Center in the Sunnyside school district originally opened in April 1976 as Valencia School, a self-contained k-12 special education school. In 1982, the district began placing children with special needs in schools closer to their homes. Through this transition, Valencia became Ocotillo Elementary, a K-5th grade elementary school. Due to declining enrollment, Ocotillo Elementary closed and by August 2009, all district preschool classrooms had been relocated to the new Ocotillo Learning Center. School Principal Paul Ohm, along with a staff of 75 highly qualified educators serve 450 children age birth to 5 years old. Children between the ages of 0-2 attend the school through a fee-based program, DES subsidies, or state FTF scholarships. Children ages 3-5 also attend through the fee-based program, DES subsidies, FTF scholarships, through Title One funding, or if they are receiving services as a child with a disability. There are a total of 22 classrooms, 21 of which are fully inclusive and one classroom is a self-contained special education classroom. All 21 integrated classrooms serve 3-5 year old children together regardless of their primary language, age (classrooms are mix-aged) and their cognitive or physical ability. To align with best

practices around continuity of care, most children stay with the same teacher during their 2 or 3 years in the preschool (3-5) classrooms. Ocotillo Learning Center also serves as the district's Child Find location. Screenings are conducted twice each month and evaluations are ongoing daily. Ocotillo Learning Center also serves as the hub for the district's Parents as Teachers program and the Family Literacy/Even Start Program. P.A.T. serves approximately 400 children age birth to 5 through a home visitation model. Family Literacy/Even Start serves approximately 55 adults (all who have 3-7 year old children enrolled in a SUSD school).



Challenges

- Funding!
- Providing support to general education teachers with special education questions and concerns
- Waiting list—there are always many children waiting to receive preschool through Title One, scholarships or the fee-based program.

Annual AzDEC Spring Conference

Many thanks to the 110 members and friends of AzDEC who attended the CARA's Kit Workshop. The participants were enthusiastic, the reviews were constructive and satisfying. Many were anxious to use their kits right away. One participant gave an in-service to her team the day after the workshop on how to best use Cara's Kit.

Thanks also to Lillian McCuen for the wonderful job she did in presenting the material and keeping people involved in activities and discussions. There was such a nice mix of participants....many school districts, agencies, university students, and a private preschool. The AZ DEC Board will get together in June and start planning for next spring's workshop.

The Board wishes to thank Cardon Children's Medical Center for use of their beautiful facility, and to Goldie LaPorte, Board member extraordinaire for making those arrangements.

Congratulations to Fran Grossenbacher of Gilbert School District on being awarded the Linda Levine Outstanding Leadership Award.



AzDEC President Jaymie Jacobs and Fran Grossenbacher

Lighthouse Program #3

By Susan Olsen-Shinn, Special Education Director

Driving home from work last night, I passed by the old building where I began my career in Early Childhood years ago. At a red light, my memory banks starting firing and I struggled not to be a distracted driver. I thought about my first experience and I remembered the strange smells, the dim lighting and an overall feeling of desperation knowing that the maze of converted portables and office buildings would always be a barrier to the premier early learning experience the staff wanted to provide our students. That night, I dreamed of the perfect setting for the perfect early learning center. Green light and fast forward to 2012 where this dream has become a reality.



The **Emily Meschler Early Learning Center** opened in the Flowing Wells School District in August, 2010. An Early Childhood program was “born” due to the vision of the school district. The center was funded through a school bond, supported by a private donor and founded on the idea that all children, no matter what color, language, or diverse needs, can learn and play together.

The building is amazing, but the connections and community that it has provided families has become pivotal. This connection is sustained through the efforts of an array of partnerships including: University of Arizona, First Things First, Community Food Bank, Reading Seed, and Flowing Wells Library. These partners have increased our ability to support families and develop community relationships. Some of the exciting events that have been initiated through these relationships is a monthly Cafecitia with the UA, which supports parent involvement by providing a neighborly coffee, books for children through Reading Seed, and friendly conversations. There has also been active composite gardening which is supported through the Community Food Bank and our unique curriculum which is based on literacy from a variety of cultures supported through the World of Words and the bookstore at the University of Arizona.



The instruction is implemented through talented and devoted teachers and paraprofessionals who have ongoing professional development to support and encourage new thinking. The teachers develop lesson plans through weekly team building meetings based on Gardner's Intelligences, Early Childhood Standards, and selected literature. They have diligently implemented Teaching Strategies GOLD, which after using two other assessments have found it to be more reliable, easier to use, and supportive to a young child's achievements. The team has found that having current and ongoing information provides a young child the opportunity to participate and grow in a rich learning environment.

“Fairness
is not
everyone
getting the
same
thing.
Fairness is
when
every child
gets what
they
need.”

Resources and Reminders

Great Resources

PACER Parent Center

A national organization, the mission of [PACER Center](#) (Parent Advocacy Coalition for Educational Rights) is to expand opportunities and enhance the quality of life of children and young adults with disabilities and their families, based on the concept of parents helping parents. PACER is for:

- Families and their children or young adults with disabilities or special health care needs from birth through adulthood.
- Educators and other professionals who work

with students with or without disabilities.

- Parents of all children and schools working together to encourage family involvement in education.

Raising Special Kids

[Raising Special Kids \(RSK\)](#) is the Parent and Training Information (PTI) Center for Arizona as funded by the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP). [Pilot Parents of Southern Arizona](#) is contracted by RSK to serve southern Arizona.

Parent Information Network Specialists (PINS)

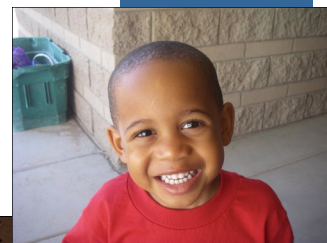
[PINS](#) was created within the Arizona Department of Education 20+ years ago to provide

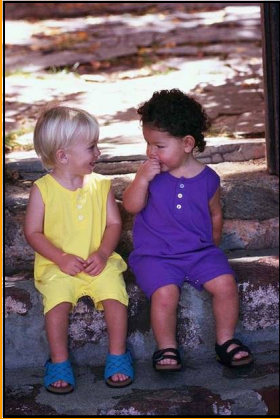
essential information to parents to actively participate in their child's special education. PINS offer training and resources to educators, college students, service providers, community agencies and parent organizations. PINS assist parents and community partners to understand the special education process and related issues.

Reminders

Next GOLD Checkpoint
May 31st

Boot Camp
June 11-14





"Hey!, What are you doing to get ready for kindergarten?"

Kindness is the language which the deaf can hear and the blind can see

~Mark Twain

Kindergarten Transitions for All

What does quality early childhood transitions look like in your district? Many folks have extensive practices for children that are receiving special education services, but what about all the other children that will be attending kindergarten this fall? Creating quality early childhood transition to kindergarten practices is the perfect task for your Early Childhood Quality Improvement Process

(ECQUIP) team! How will you get ready families? Research suggests that family involvement in education can boost young children's academic achievement. How does your program shape family involvement? Research also suggests that family's involvement at school depends on how welcome they feel, yet many parents have no

contact with the teacher or visit the school prior to kindergarten.

Consider expanding your transition to kinder practices to include children and families that may be transitioning from Head Start, home care and child care environments.

See the [sample transition plan](#) on our website!

Public Comment Open—AzEIP

Last October, the Federal Regulations for IDEA Part C (Early Intervention) were published. As a result, AzEIP (Arizona's "Lead Agency" for Early Intervention) is required to have policies and procedures in place that ensure compliance with the regulations by July 1, 2012. AzEIP has published their proposed policies and procedures and is seeking public comment. Three public sessions have already been held and we are down to the final few days to make comments or suggestions.

The chapter that most immediately impacts School Districts is Chapter 4, which covers transition from Early Intervention to Special Education Preschool. The following link will direct you to Chapter 4: https://www.azdes.gov/uploadedFiles/Arizona_Early_Intervention_Program/Chapter-4-Transition.pdf

If you wish to read and comment on all chapters, you may access all sections at : <https://www.azdes.gov/main.aspx?menu=98&id=7520>

Summer Boot Camp for Early Childhood Educators

ADE/ECE presents the "Summer Boot Camp". Participants will have the opportunity to attend standard module training for several of the Early Learning Standards, Intro of the Program Guidelines Ongoing Progress Monitoring, Introduction to the CLASS and MANY MORE~A sample preschool classroom will be set up for hands on trainings and to offer a concrete example of a developmentally appropriate room arrangement. SO STRAP ON YOUR BOOTS AND GET IN SHAPE ECE STYLE! June 11-14

[Register Now!](#)



Give me 50!

Developmentally Appropriate Use of Technology/Screen Time

Technology in preschool



[Click Here](#)

to read the full position statement.

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and Fred Rogers Center for Early Learning and Children's Media at Saint Vincent College adopted a joint position statement regarding **"Technology and Interactive Media as Tools in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children from Birth through Age 8"**. When used wisely, technology and media can support learning and relationships with peers and adults. Non-interactive media such as TV programs, videos, DVD's and streaming media can lead to passive viewing and overexposure to screen time and are not substitutes for interactive and engaging uses of digital media or for interactions with adults and other children. It is the role and responsibility of the educator to make informed, intentional, and appropriate choices about if, how, and when technology and media are used in early childhood classrooms for children birth through age 8.

Let's Move! Child Care

Let's Move! Child Care is an initiative by First Lady Michelle Obama to assist those working with young children to teach about proper nutrition and exercise. Today's children are more likely to be overweight or obese. Three times more children are obese today than just 30 years ago. Now, nearly a third of children in

America are overweight or obese. The rate skyrockets to almost 40% in African American and Hispanic communities. Plus, more children are being diagnosed with obesity-related conditions that were traditionally only seen in adults — like Type 2 diabetes and high blood pressure. Even more disheartening, many

of these kids will experience serious conditions like heart disease, cancer, and stroke as adults. The Let's Move! Website provides information to make learning about nutrition fun and to get kids moving!



Early Childhood Special Education Contact Information

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[Click here to access past ECE Newsletters](#)

NEW!! Networking Question

This is a new feature. We will publish a question from districts and record responses to publish in the next edition. This month we'll start out with two burning questions from districts. Please send your response to [Juliana Panqueva](mailto:Juliana.Panqueva@azed.gov)

What curriculum is your preschool using?

What battery of tests do you use for your preschool CDA?

